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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet for adult educators contains information on integrating material on health and life-style into the adult basic education classroom. Ten steps are summarized for discussion in the class by adults: proper exercise, good diet, weight control, avoiding cigarettes, sensible drinking habits, taking drugs, handling stress, safety consciousness, sleep, and contentment. A life-style analysis sheet is provided to get students thinking about some health areas and to find out which life-style areas need to be studied in class. Examples of activities that can be used in the classroom to focus on health and life-style are also listed. (YLB)

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FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

IMPROVING YOUR LIFESTYLE

Sally Sue Crawford

Introduction

Not only is it important to know how to read and write, but it is important to have good health. There is a relationship between good health and a longer, happier life. Good health depends on many things--where you live and work, what you inherit from your parents, whether you see doctors for a checkup, and the personal habits you do daily and usually without second thought. All of this affects your health, and often we do not see the importance of looking and feeling healthy.

Lifestyle

There are risks that your adult students *can* control. These are risks which come from their personal habits. These habits are know as their lifestyle. Lifestyle is the most important factor affecting health today. Most of the leading causes of death can be reduced if people change their lifestyle.

Activities can be integrated into the adult basic education classroom to address issues of lifestyle. Vocabulary can be developed around such words as lifestyle, personal habits, risks, stress, diet, and contentment. The following 10 steps should be discussed in the class by the adults.

Proper Exercise. Everyone should schedule regular exercise of fast walks, swimming, or bicycling at least three times per week for 15-20 minutes. This leads to a healthier heart, weight loss, and better sleeping at night.

Good Diet. The body needs food on a regular basis. If you must snack, eat only fresh fruit or vegetables. Reduce fats in the diet. Substitute lean meats, chicken, fish, and skim milk for fatty meats and whole milk products.

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Life Style Analysis Sheet

Your lifestyle greatly affects your health. What are your personal health habits in each of the following ten areas? What would you like this lifestyle area to be like six months from now?

Lifestyle information is very personal. Your name will not be associated with your answers. The purpose of this analysis sheet is to get you to start thinking about some health areas and to find out which lifestyle areas we need to study in class.

1. **Personal Exercise**--What things do you presently do for exercise? What things could you build into your lifestyle during the next six months to increase your exercise?

2. **Good Diet**--What are your favorite foods? What diet changes would you like to develop during the next six months?

3. **Weight Control**--How do you feel about your present weight? What weight changes would you like to make in the near future?

4. **Avoiding Cigarettes**--Do you presently smoke? If yes, how much? If you smoke, do you want to try to stop smoking during the next six months?

5. **Sensible Drinking Habits**--Do you presently know someone with a drinking problem? What things would you like to know about sensible drinking habits?

6. **Taking Drugs**--Do you presently know someone who has a drug problem? What things would you like to know about drugs?

7. **Handling Stress**--What things in your daily life cause you stress? What things would you like to know about dealing with stress?

8. **Safety Conscious**--What safety habits have you developed and included in your daily lifestyle? What safety areas do you need to learn more about?

9. **Sleep**--How well do you usually sleep? What changes would you like to make in your sleeping habits?

10. **Contentment**--Are you generally happy with your life? What changes would you like to make in life to make you more content?

Weight Control. If you can "pinch an inch" at the waist or upper arm, then you probably are overweight. Decide what causes you to overeat; then avoid those situations. Never buy groceries right after work when you are hungry. Buy them after you eat; then you are not tempted to buy so many snacks. Eat on a smaller plate than the rest of the family. Drink a glass of water right before a meal, and you will fill up faster.

Avoiding Cigarettes. Cigarette smoking is the *single* most important preventable cause of illness and early death. Smoking is a factor in heart disease, stroke, and cancer. Within 12 hours of taking your last cigarette, your body will start to heal itself. Do new things so that you do not think about smoking. If you cannot quit smoking completely, try smoking less each day.

Sensible Drinking Habits. Alcohol produces changes in mood and behavior. Regular use of alcohol can lead to addiction and disease. Mixing drinking and driving can lead to fatal and crippling accidents. So if you drink, do it wisely and in moderation.

Taking Drugs. More people are using drugs--both legal and illegal--today than ever before. Some prescribed drugs can be dangerous if taken when drinking or before driving. Experimenting with drugs can cause physical and mental problems or even death.

Handling Stress. Stress is a normal part of living; everyone faces it to some degree. Properly handled, stress should not be a problem, but unhealthy responses to stress such as driving too fast, drinking too much, or becoming very angry can cause problems. Even on a very busy day, find a few minutes to slow down and relax. Talking over a problem with someone you trust can often help you find a satisfactory solution. Learn what things are "worth fighting about" and what things are less important.

Safety Conscious. Think "safety first" at home, at work, at play, and on the highway. Buckle your seat belts and obey traffic rules. Keep poisons and weapons out of the reach of children, and keep emergency numbers by your telephone.

Sleep. Sleep is essential for survival. The older you get, the more sleep you need. Those who go without sleep on a regular basis will find they will start having problems.

Contentment. Seek a reason to be happy instead of worrying about problems. Above all, do not fight your enemies; outlive them.

Activities

Numerous activities can be used in the classroom to focus on health and lifestyle. These activities may use a variety of materials such as magazines, newspapers, community resources, and guest speakers. Examples include:

- Collect pictures from magazines to illustrate aspects of good lifestyles or poor lifestyles.
- Collect newspaper articles about the different aspects.
- Have everyone in the class do an exercise for two weeks and get reactions.
- Compare labels on different food products to determine which product is more nutritious. Compare calories on different foods.
- Get a physical fitness expert to come to class and use the calipers to determine if you can "pinch an inch." Have someone from Weight Watchers visit the class and give a talk.
- Visit the local Lung Association or Cancer Society and get material on smoking. Have a guest speaker from either agency come and give a talk and show a film.
- Contact the local police department and ask them to bring in information about drinking and driving and seat belt safety. Most also have films they can bring to the class.
- Contact the Drug and Alcohol Section of the local health department and either get information or a guest speaker.
- Contact the local hospital or health department and ask for a guest speaker on stress management.
- Get each adult student to be responsible for one step in the lifestyle analysis and have the student contact the community agency and arrange for a speaker, film, or pamphlets.
- Have the students "brainstorm" about what causes them stress and make a list of these causes. They may be surprised to find similarities between people.
- Have the students pantomime various lifestyle habits.
- Have the students count the number of commercials on TV on a week-night and a Saturday morning that have to do with food.
- Ask the students which food commercials they liked the best and why.

Conclusion

Health is important for everyone. It can be used in the classroom as a relevant topic around which learning skills can be built. Reading, writing, discussion, and problem-solving activities can focus on lifestyles, and education can then address the development of the entire body.